

**Master Gardener Association of Bergen County
Board Meeting Minutes – March 19, 2024**

President Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

Keith Mazanec read the roll call:

Present: Hosting – Theresa Schneider, Lisa Yoler, Keith Mazanec, Miriam Taub, Arnie Friedman, Chris Kozar, Janet Stofkoper, Donna Faustini, Liz Gil, Suzanne Danzig, Joseph Cooper, Herb Arbeiter, Karen Riede, Melody Corcoran, Cesar Coy, Alison Bloomfield

Absent: Jean Friedman, Janet Schulz

Officer Reports:

President – Theresa Schneider

- Follow up from February meeting
 - February Budget Ad Hoc meeting postponed as key board members were out of town until early March.
 - Established an Auditing - Ad Hoc Committee with Maria Bushman taking lead. Looking for one additional person to help. Will begin audit in April time frame.
 - Ad Hoc Committee for policies and procedures put on hold pending receipt of procedural manual developed at state level.
- For this month
 - Finalize and approve 2024 budget
 - Feedback from meetings with Ruth Carll, State Leader, Consumer Horticulture and Master Gardener Programs and the RMGANJ
 - Revamping MG training across the state to ensure consistency and a solid foundation.
 - Standardization of processes across counties.
 - Procedural manual - developed, but was not vetted with MGs.
 - State Leader is reinvigorating the manual and will pull in MGs to update /vet.
 - Focus on MG Hotline
 - Takeaways from meeting - what we need to do now
 - B&O insurance.
 - Focus on educational programming for homeowners of BC.
 - MG Hotline.

Vice President – Lisa Yoler

There was some confusion regarding liability insurance. Some facilities do have insurance. However, for example; if someone was to get hurt while attending a meeting, could a board member be sued?

Treasurer – Jean Friedman (absent)

In Jean’s absence, Theresa presented and filed the Treasurer’s report for February, 2024; 2023 annual report remains pending.

TD Bank would not open an account for us nor let us open a CD. We were told we need to provide documentation that we were an organization. We believe we were incorporated in May, 1996.

Recording Secretary – Keith Mazanec

Approval of Minutes

President Schneider announced the Recording Secretary had distributed the February 20, 2024 minutes electronically on March 13, 2024. She inquired if there was any discussion regarding the minutes. Since there were no corrections, the minutes were approved.

Corresponding Secretary – Miriam Taub

Miriam reported that she had distributed two editions of the Potting Shed in March, as well as a reminder notice regarding tonight’s meeting.

Committee Reports:

Community outreach liaison – Arnie Friedman

Arnie reported that the Speaker’s Bureau is very busy. The article Arnie ran in the newsletter has received several responses. Donna Dorgan approached Arnie and is interested in working with Donna Faustini. Dylan Grana, Class of 2022, is interested in working with special events. Karen received requests for four outreach events. Two upcoming events are Party for the Planet at Van Saun Park on Saturday, April 20 and EarthFest Overpeck at Overpeck Park, Ridgefield Park on May 19. Karen will coordinate assistance for these events.

***Publicity Chair: Maria Bushman**

Maria reported that we have 36 followers on Facebook and 46 followers on Instagram. We had 46 posts on Facebook so far in 2024 and 24 posts on Instagram. Since we started using social media last year, we’ve posted 119 items.

Hospitality – Chris Kozar

Provided the coffee and food set-up for tonight’s meeting. Chris also thanked everyone who brought refreshments for this evening.

Membership – Janet Stofkoper

As of today, we have 90 dues-paying members.

Newsletter – Miriam Taub

Miriam is working with the site coordinators to get opening dates and testimonials about their individual sites.

Garden club liaison - Janet Schulz (absent)

Miriam reported that Janet is working with garden clubs to get information as to when they are holding plant sales.

Programs – Donna Faustini

Tonight's speaker is Tony Bracco who will discuss gardening in small spaces including containers. (Paul Split who was last month's speaker has donated seeds for distribution at tonight's general membership meeting.)

April's speaker will be Ruth Carll, whose topic is succulents. (4/16)

May's speaker will be Dr. Charles West who will discuss paw paw trees. (5/21)

April and May's meetings will be held in the Learning Center on the fourth floor.

Site coordinator liaison – Liz Gil

On March 2, I had sent a note to Site Coordinators to cheer them on for the upcoming season and to ask about any changes to the contact information on the website.

I also mentioned the possibility of setting up one-day blasts again this season. One is set for Teaneck Creek for Thursday, April 11 from 9 am-1 pm.

In the note I suggested that if coordinators were interested they could take 5 minutes prior to the monthly meeting to come and talk about their sites. If they let us know ahead of time, we could make that happen.

These were the responses:

The Hermitage - Bernadette White opened for the season. They had their first spring cleanup March 19 - 20.

Butterfly and Native Garden. - Tammy Laverty

"Our site description looks perfect - no changes needed."

NYNJ Trail Conference - Terry Cohn

"Thanks for the email. The Habitat Helpers at the NYNJ Trail Conference is gearing up for another season. We are always in need of volunteers & hope there will be more master gardeners joining us this year. We haven't established the 2024 dates. I will let Miriam know when there is something to include in the newsletter. So far, things are the same as last year."

Washington Spring Garden - Suzanne Danzig

"I will be speaking to Janet this week and meeting with the county designer within the next 2 weeks to discuss any projects she might like us to tackle. I would love to get a 'blast' on the calendar but wanted to discuss this with Janet first."

Mary S.Topolsky Garden in Teaneck - Harriet Steiner

We are opening our site March 14. Our hours will be 10 am to 1 pm. We welcome new Master Gardeners who would like to help create a wonderful and beautiful native garden that has a wonderful view of the Hackensack River and extends right to the river. Give me Harriet a call, or just show up this Thursday the 14th at 10 am.

Garretson Forge and Farm - Lida Gellman

They had their pea planting day on Sunday, March 17. The weather was perfect and they had a great turnout. There was a large number of volunteers plus many visitors.

Teaneck Creek Conservancy - Paula Leibowitz

They will hold a one-day blast on Thursday, April 11 from 9 am – 1 pm. The volunteers will work in the Peace Labyrinth and Phase 2 of the Native Plant Garden.

This is the note sent to coordinators on March 2:

Dear Site Coordinators

Spring is already in the air! The bulbs are starting to peek their little green heads out of the ground. I see crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils, and even a cluster of columbine that is unfurling leaves close to the ground. With spring so teasingly close, you are all surely planning your gardens and thinking about the upcoming season at your individual sites.

Each of the 13 MG of BC volunteer sites is unique with different challenges and goals.

Garretson has a beautiful and productive vegetable garden to maintain with pea planting right around the corner. Thielke is battling the entrenched Japanese knotweed and working on restoring and replanting natives on the property. Teaneck Creek has recently completed a restoration project that has transformed what was once a dump site into a productive and gorgeous habitat for wildlife and a refuge for people. Washington Spring will begin maintenance on one of the most Zen azalea and rhododendron gardens in Bergen County.

Every single one of your sites is beautiful and so desperately needed not only for our collective sanity, but also to educate and connect the people of our community with the peace and wonder of nature.

The one thing each site has in common is the need for people to be engaged and support it with both hard work and appreciation. So, this year why not use the power of teamwork to make the hard work that much easier and put a one-day blast on the calendar? The blasts that were held last year were a welcome boost for the sites and an opportunity for MGs to interact, network and make friends and get to know the sites.

Let us know if you have any ideas to improve how we collaborate and work as a team. We'd love to hear from you.

There are so many things that we can learn from each other. If you would like to take five minutes discussing your site at one of our MG meetings, let me know and we'll make it happen. Let us know what is going on, share your experiences and recruit some MGs to your site.

What we need from you now:

- Take a few moments to review your site's information on the MG of BC website to make sure that none of the information has changed.
- Provide information on when your site is opening for the 2024 season.
- And provide a new photo of your site, if you want to change from what's currently on the website.

We'd love to promote your site in the Potting Shed, so send us a note on what you're planning for the season.

Miriam Taub has provided these guidelines when sending photos for the Potting Shed:

- Please send photos in .jpg format.
- We're looking for happy faces of MGs volunteering.
- Include only MGs and interns in photos. Do not include any children (even your own).
- It's fine to pose your subjects with their plants, tools, or any other equipment. If you have a community volunteer in the photo (and it can't be avoided), be sure to identify the person by first and last name and note that the person is a community volunteer at your site.
- Avoid photographing people bending over with their rear ends in the air or faces turned away from the camera.

Be sure to get the names of everyone in the photo and, if possible, the MGs or interns by class year.

Please respond to this email to let me know that you've received it and with any changes you may have for the website or with any thoughts or concerns for the season.

Elizabeth Gil
MG of BC | Site Coordinator Liaison

Volunteer Records – Suzanne Danzig

YTD approximately 46 MGs logged a total of 898 volunteer hours, 648 hours at 10 of our outreach sites, 256 administrative duties and 4 teaching hours. 40 of our members have logged 236 CE hours.

More of our sites will be opening in the next several weeks when we look to increase those hours considerably as the spring time progress.

Volunteer Records cont...

The following is an article I submitted to the Potting Shed, which I hope you will find interesting...

Congratulations MG of BC, you have made a difference in 2023! Here is a brief outline of what MG of BC contributed to Bergen County in 2023 with our valuable volunteer hours. Approximately 90+ volunteers recorded 8,513 volunteer hours at our designated sites as well as teaching and administrative hours. MG of BC recorded 7,358 outreach hours, 889 administrative hours, 67 teaching hours, and 199 special project hours. Based on an hourly wage of \$33.82 for volunteers in NJ we contributed approximately \$287,909.66 to Bergen County. In addition MG of BC recorded 1385 hours of continuing ed. We should all be very proud of our efforts year after year to beautify and preserve our very special sites here in Bergen County. Keep up the wonderful work you do.

Website – Joseph Cooper

Joseph had a question that he thought there was a problem with the Bergen County Zoo contact link. Jeff Chan had been away and Miriam will make the correction needed.

RMGANJ report – Herb Arbeiter

March 14, 2024 – RMGANJ Report

Dave Parsons – NJ MG State Board President

Dave's focus was on the fall conference.

- This year's theme will be "Trees/Forestry/Silviculture."
- The date is Oct. 5 with Oct. 26 as a backup date.
- They are looking for 3 speakers.
- He would like to have display booths in the hallway and possible breakout sessions.
- There was some discussion of award presentation but no decisions made. We discussed the possibility of having a separate awards ceremony.

RMGANJ report cont...

Ruth Carll – Consumer Horticulturist and MG State Coordinator

Main points:

- She met separately with the MG boards of all participating counties.
- She met with Brian Schilling to discuss the need for goals and needs of the Master Gardener Program.
- Stressed the need for having consistency among all counties. This includes reporting hours, providing Helpline, following Rutgers guidelines, etc. There should be statewide training and statewide policy.
- The purpose of the MG program is to educate the public, not to do manual labor. More emphasis should be placed on presentations.
- MG organizations should report directly to Rutgers and not be 501 (c) 3. Board members of a 501(c)3 could be held liable in a law suit. These organizations should be dissolved.

Theresa Schneider, Lisa Yoler and Herb Arbeiter attended the meeting representing Bergen County.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension liaison – Karen Riede

RCE Report to MG Association Board 3.19.24

Joel Flagler

1. Rutgers has announced the hiring of a new State Coordinator in Tree Fruit IPM. Dr. Janine Spies has her PhD in entomology and will oversee the programming efforts and IPM scouting all around the state. She replaces Dean Polk who held this position for 30 years and retired in 2022.
2. Rutgers has announced the hiring of another faculty position in the ANR Dept (which includes all of us as well as the MG program). Kate Brown is the new Ag Agent in Somerset County. Her focus areas will include ag viability and in farm food safety. Her office is with RCE Somerset in Bridgewater.

RCE report cont...

3. Joel is working with the BC Board of Ag on a project that used the historic ag photos he inherited from previous BC Ag Agents. The photos and documents date back to 1895 when the Board of Ag began. In 1914 when the Smith-Lever Act passed, Cooperative Extension started documenting its efforts to help the farming community, which was huge and accounted for thousands of acres in Bergen County. Photos include huge dairy farms in Wyckoff and vast acreage of cauliflower, celery and other crops, as well as dairy cows. There are also images early Ag Agents including James McFaul who brokered the purchase of an old pig farm in Wyckoff by the county, and helped develop it into the McFaul Environmental Center.
4. Joel has been invited to serve another term as adviser to the Board of Directors at the NJ Botanical Gardens at Skylands. He agreed and will serve proudly. The MG of BC Board is invited to join him for a tour of Skylands on May 14; meeting 10:30 am in the Parking Lot A, or at the Carriage House at 10:45. Anyone serving on the Board is welcome to join the new class of MG's on this tour. Please RSVP to Joel or Karen so we have a headcount.

MG Class Liaison – Cesar Coy

Everything is going well. We've attended nine classes so far.

Alison Bloomfield – Introduced herself. Alison teaches sustainability, nutrition and edible gardening.

Unfinished Business

Motion: Suzanne Danzig, Volunteer Records Chair, motioned to remove Joanne Homberg as the site coordinator at Davies Arboretum as she no longer meets liaison qualifications (no longer a certified Master Gardener.) Motion was seconded by Arnie and adopted after debate.

New Business

No additional new business.

Open Forum

After a two-minute recess, Theresa led the open forum portion of the meeting. Attendees were encouraged to bring forth their ideas on how we can make their experiences as Master Gardeners more meaningful. Some examples included: possibly holding meetings at various locations or different times; additional and different social activities, etc.

Adjournment

***Motion to adjourn:** Lisa motioned to adjourn the meeting. Joseph seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm.